

Cable
Text:

UNCLAS ANKARA 02258

SIPDIS
CX:

ACTION: CONS
INFO: ECON POL DCM AMB RSO PA

DISSEMINATION: CONS
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: A/DCM:DSREEBNY
DRAFTED: CONS:SJSCHIPSHOCK/PCU
CLEARED: NONE

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RR RUEHC RUEHAM
DE RUEHAK #2258 2471449
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 041449Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3620
INFO RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 0926

UNCLAS ANKARA 002258

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PHUM PREF TU IZ
SUBJECT: PRM A/S SAUERBREY VISIT TO TURKEY: CONTINUED QUICK
PROCESSING OF IRAQI REFUGEES

¶1. Summary: In an August 22-24 visit to Turkey, PRM Bureau Assistant Secretary Ellen Sauerbrey expressed thanks to Government of Turkey

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counterparts for their cooperation in issuing exit permission to in-country Iraqi refugees being resettled to the United States, and requested that this cooperation continue in the coming months. Government of Turkey interlocutors indicated that the cooperation will continue, but voiced concern that news of large numbers of Iraqis leaving for the U.S. from Turkey could attract additional Iraqi asylum-seekers into their country.
End summary.

GOT Calls Cordial

¶2. A/S Sauerbrey met with Sertac Sonmezay, the Deputy Director General of the Migration, Asylum and Property Office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. She expressed appreciation to the GOT for being a generous host to Iraqis needing temporary asylum, and for their fast-tracking the issuance of exit permits. Sonmezay remarked that this is the first time in recent history the GOT has agreed to process such a large number of refugees in such a short time.

¶3. He continued by repeating a key concern of the Turkish government about Turkey becoming a magnet for additional Iraqi refugees seeking a quick way to the west. Sonmezay observed that an Iraqi refugee in Turkey has a much higher percentage chance of resettlement to western countries than Iraqi refugees in other countries in the region. He expressed particular concern about Iraqis currently in Syria crossing into Turkey. The A/S responded that the USG does not support or encourage secondary movement to Turkey.

Message to Interior Ministry: No quotas

¶4. A/S Sauerbrey made two calls on top officials with the Turkish National Police (TNP), which is responsible for issuing exit permits, and which falls under the Ministry of Interior. During her meeting with Oguz Kagan Koksal, Director General of the TNP, she

dispelled the prevailing belief that the U.S. has a quota system that governs refugee admissions. She indicated that the U.S. would be willing to accept for resettlement as many of the Iraqi refugees in Turkey as possible. She also emphasized that when conditions in Iraq further stabilize, the USG would be happy to see these same refugees returning to help build their country. In an additional meeting, she met with Kadir Ay, Acting Director of Foreigners, Border and Asylum Department, who provided firm assurances of continued cooperation.

NGOs poised for action

¶ 15. A/S Sauerbrey visited International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) offices in Istanbul and observed a pre-screening interview with an Iraqi applicant family. In addition, she dropped in on a pre-departure cultural orientation session. ICMC staff briefed her on the time line of processing refugees and the multiple steps involved.

¶ 16. In Ankara, the assistant secretary met with representatives of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and International Organization for Migration (IOM). UNHCR country representative Ana Liria Franch indicated they are registering approximately 100 new Iraqis a week; some quite newly arrived, others who have been in Turkey studying or working. UNHCR indicated that there are refugees coming forward that they are not submitting because they have come into Turkey from Syria and Jordan. UNHCR is carefully holding to a commitment it has made to the GOT to not handle secondary movement cases.

¶ 17. At the IOM, Director Maurizio Busatti reiterated his organization's readiness to play a continuing role in the resettlement effort. They have been particularly involved in arranging travel for the refugees. Busatti observed that he has heard concerns from the MFA that refugee inflow is an ingredient for instability. The challenge to NGOs, he said, is to convince Turkey that the nominal number of refugees in-country do not pose a threat to Turkey's stability. Busatti does fear, however, that the Turks are approaching the "enough is enough" stage.

Seeing Off the Refugees

¶ 18. The A/S spent 25 minutes with a group of refugees, mostly Chaldean Christians, departing for the U.S. from Istanbul airport on August 22. After speaking with the group as a whole, she shook hands with each refugee and heard anecdotes from each family group. A spokesperson from the group expressed gratitude to the Turkish government for their hospitality. The A/S reminded the refugees that while we hope they thrive in the U.S., the goal was for them to be able to return to a stable, peaceful and democratic Iraq.

¶ 19. A/S Sauerbrey did not have an opportunity to clear this message before traveling.

WILSON